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The New Indian Express
Wishes its readers a

Happy Independence Day

U.S. TO RESUME STUDENT VISA PROCESSING IN FIVE METROS

US Consulates in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad will start processing visa requests from Monday

PRIORITY ON CLEARING BACKLOG

The processing will be on a limited basis. A statement by the US Embassy in New Delhi said, priority will be given to emergency student and exchange visitor appointments received before August 12. Public appointments will be offered thereafter. "Prospective students should seek an appointment no more than three weeks before their classes start," it said

PROCESSING COULD BE DELAYED

- "We will try to handle requests based on when we receive them and when classes will start," the statement said
- However, due to limited appointment availability, all requests may not be processed in time for the start of the fall semester
- Processing of others visas remain suspended due to Covid-19

25%

DROP EXPECTED IN FOREIGN STUDENT ENROLLMENT AT U.S. UNIVS THIS YEAR

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VIJAYAPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Bhushan guilty of contempt: SC

Activist-lawyer faces up to six months in jail; quantum of sentence on August 20

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday held activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of contempt of court for tweeting against the judiciary. The quantum of sentence will be decided on August 20. Bhushan faces a maximum sentence of six months in jail with fine.

"The attack on the Supreme Court does not only have the effect of tending an ordinary litigant of losing confidence in the SC, but may also tend to lose confidence in the minds of other judges in the country in its highest court," a bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said.

The court discharged Twitter from contempt for publishing Bhushan's tweets, saying it accepts the microblogging website's explanation that it is only an intermediary.

Bhushan had posted two tweets, which the court found contemptuous. The first one, posted on June 27, criticised the functioning of the Supreme Court, while the second tweet posted two days later portrayed CJI S A Bobde in poor light.

Both tweets were taken down by Twitter after the SC issued contempt notice.

"Bhushan's tweets are based on distorted facts, amount to committing of criminal contempt. The tweets are not fair criticism of functioning of judiciary made in public interest. The scurrilous allegations, which are malicious in nature and have the tendency to scandalise the court, are not expected from a person, who is a lawyer of 30 years standing," said the bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra, B R Gavai and Krishna Murari.

In his defence, Bhushan argued he was only exercising his freedom of speech and that giving his opinion about the functioning of the apex court does not amount to contempt of court. P8, 9

Gehlot govt wins vote of confidence

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

WITH the return of 19 dissident MLAs, led by Sachin Pilot, to the Congress party's fold, Ashok Gehlot government sailed through a vote of confidence in the Rajasthan Assembly on Friday

For Gehlot, establishing his majority in the Assembly was critical as it ensured the stability of his government for at least the next six months.

During the debate, Gehlot slammed the Centre for allegedly trying to topple his government.

"What was done in Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Madhya Pradesh? Elected governments are being toppled and democracy is in danger," Gehlot said.

Earlier, as the special Assembly session began, all eyes were on Pilot. He asserted at the outset that the party has the support of 107 MLAs in the 200-member House.

COUNCILLOR'S HUSBAND HELD OVER RIOT LINK

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

ADDING grist to speculation about the involvement of political forces in Tuesday night's rioting and arson in Kaval Byrasandra, BBMP councillor Irshad Begum's husband Kaleem Pasha was arrested late on Thursday night. He is known to be close to former Home Minister and senior Congress leader K J George.

Earlier on Thursday, Pasha was seen with George when the latter visited the D J Halli police station. The Central Crime Branch police arrested Pasha late on Thursday night and are interrogating him for suspected links with the violence that led to the death of three people in police firing. Pulakeshi Nagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy's house was also ransacked and set ablaze by the rioters. Seven police teams, led by Joint Commissioner of Police Sandeep Patil, are investigating the case.

With allegations on the involvement of local leaders getting shriller, George said there was no question of supporting or protecting anyone involved in the violence and arson. The police should conduct a detailed probe and take merciless action against those involved, he stressed. Stating it is not correct to politicise the violence, George said he had met senior officers on Thursday and asked them to take stern action against those involved. P7

EXPRESS READ

SPB, under treatment for Covid, critical: hospital

Chennai: Veteran playback singer S P Balasubrahmanyam, who tested positive for Covid-19, was in a critical condition after his health deteriorated, the private hospital treating him said on Friday. In the evening, his son SP Charan said his father was 'stable'.

Now order prescription medicines on Amazon

Bengaluru: E-commerce giant Amazon on Friday announced its foray into the online prescription medicines space in the country, with the launch of 'Amazon Pharmacy' in Bengaluru, which may be extended to other cities too. The platform already retails non-prescription, traditional Ayurvedic and Unani medicines under the Amazon healthstore category | P2

Pinarayi, seven Kerala ministers in quarantine

Tiruvananthapuram: Kerala chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, seven ministers and the DGP went into quarantine on Friday. They had visited the aircrash site at Karipur last week, where they came in contact with two officials who tested positive for Covid-19

RBI to pay ₹57,128 crore in dividend to Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Reserve Bank of India on Friday approved a dividend payout of ₹57,128 crore to the government for 2019-20. Last year, RBI had made a record payment of ₹1.76 lakh crore. While the latest payment is in line with Budget estimates, it may not be of great help as the government's fiscal deficit widened to ₹6.6 lakh crore by the June quarter.

"Along with the economy, tax revenues too have shrunk. While income from GST halved in the April-June quarter compared to the same period last year, income tax collections fell by 36% and taxes on corporates came in 23% short," said an official. The decision to transfer money to the government was taken at RBI's board meeting on Friday. The board also decided to maintain the central bank's contingency risk buffer (risk provisioning) at 5.5%.

BOEING
DEDICATED TO INDIA'S FUTURE
This Independence Day, Boeing remains dedicated to the inspiring progress of India and proudly supports the nation's focus towards becoming a global leader in aerospace and defence.